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17. ABSTRACT (MAX. 250 WORDS)

Relatively successful elementary school pupils from low income households in depressed neighborhoods of the urban North were compared with relatively average and failing pupils from identical settings. No attempt was made to illuminate the interplay of psychological, familial, environmental, sociological, and economic factors in the education of children from disadvantaged families. Academic motivation was evaluated from the pupil's viewpoint. Results indicated that the desire to learn is not innate, but acquired through an interaction of school, subject matter, and the adults and peers who transmit attitudes toward school.

Interviews were conducted, and although parents felt that education was important, they became vague when asked how this would help a child when he became 17 or 18 years old. They seemed to lack information about educational opportunities after high school graduation. The committee recommended: a continuation of the grant to complete scoring and analyses of the first phase of the study and a systematic interviewing of children and their families.

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The Successful Urban Slum Child: A Psychological Study of Personality and Academic Success in Deprived Children

Grant Number 200-4-102

Bernard Mackler, Project Director
Institute of Urban Studies
Teachers College, Columbia University

Progress Report and Prospectus

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March, 1965

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ON EDUCATIONAL DIFFERENCES
HARVARD GRADUATE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

I. IDENTIFICATION:

Grant number 200-4-102. The Successful Urban Slum Child: A Psychological Study of Personality and Academic Success in Deprived Children conducted at the Institute of Urban Studies, Teachers College, Columbia University.

II. BACKGROUND:

A. Purpose: This study compares relatively successful elementary school pupils from low-income households in depressed neighborhoods of the urban north with relatively average and failing pupils from identical settings. The aim is to document different patterns of personal and social development and to relate these patterns to scholastic performance among disadvantaged children. The emphasis is on differences in the personal and interpersonal situations that mold the highly motivated in contrast to the average, and the failing student.

The study illuminates the interplay of psychological, familial, environmental (emphatically the school), sociological (primarily peer and neighborhood), and economic factors in the education of children from economically deprived families. It attempts to evaluate academic motivation from the pupil's viewpoint, that is how he sees and desires to do well academically, and to relate acquired motivation to interpersonal relations. The desire to learn is not innate but acquired through an interaction with school subject matter and those adults and peers who transmit attitudes toward school. The pupil reacts quickly to encouraging or discouraging features of the environment, and thereby develops a way of looking at learning. He internalizes the environment and makes of it a way of life, a style of performance in school motivated by past rewards and pains.

Children from poor families in the urban north do not all remain illiterate, impoverished, dependent, or confined to a life in a downtrodden community.[1] Among the poor, school success is available as a desired goal. The schools act and are predisposed to teach. Teachers expect the children to learn. The fact that some pupils choose learning and school success as goals signifies that, perhaps, individual motives influence this choice. Now, as well as in the past, pupils from the lowest SES group succeed academically. One would assume that if teachers are anticipating learning, there will be a certain number of pupils who would fulfill these expectations. Pupils learn to recognize their teachers' expectations and values by the manner in which teachers respond to their students' scholastic performances. Little is known about the process of academic success in deprived areas; less is known about who succeeds, and how. We hope to shed light on these questions.

School systems are in the midst of reevaluating present methods of teaching educationally disadvantaged children. This project will seek to unravel causal links between success and environmental supports that might modify and improve educational programs. Related to the question of academic success and failure is the issue of how one breaks out of the encirclement of poverty. Education permits economic opportunity and self-sufficiency. Social researchers and social welfare practitioners have wondered why some clients continually reappear for help while the non-client population, with similar backgrounds, never appear. An

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[1] Most writers emphasize that these children are ill equipped socially and psychologically to cope well with the academic environment. Some writers imply that virtually all children from deprived homes are doomed to failure in school.

understanding of the desire to succeed, to do as much as one can for oneself under the most adverse conditions, may bring an understanding of individuals who do not appear for welfare aid. It may also affect treatment programs of social welfare if we can see where the causal nexes occur that impel one group towards hope and independence, and another group towards despair and dependence. Perhaps treatment and practice might be modified if we knew what factors lead to independence and what factors predisposed an individual to dependence.

B. Method: The study was envisioned originally as a three-year project. For the first year we did a thorough study of the academic and school environment. Children in one elementary school were tested on scholastic, intelligence, creativity, and sociometric tests. Teaching and administrative personnel were interviewed and selected classes were observed. The aim of this phase was to ascertain and identify the various abilities of each pupil and his school milieu.

For the second year of the study, a group of relatively successful students will be selected, and analytical comparisons of home and peer group affiliation will be made with these students and average and failing students. Selected factors such as the relative size of families, income, father in home, and other economic and social factors will be matched for the three groups of successful, average, and below-average students. First the successful students will be identified and home, family, and economic conditions will be evaluated. Then students, academically average and below-average will be matched for comparable home and economic environments. Interviews and observation will be

the major sources of information for this year's study; the interviews will be conducted primarily with the children, their families and peer groups. Another segment of this selected sample will contain relatively successful children from severely deprived families (e.g., fatherless, illegitimate, extremely low-income, on welfare, many siblings, overcrowded living quarters in old run-down tenements, parents with records of anti-social behavior and neglect). Interviews will be made with families of average and failing children who have similar home environments.

The third year of this project will be an intensive study of children who succeed academically and those who do not. An attempt will be made to measure the individual's desire to succeed academically. Test construction will include a survey of available material and literature related to academic motivation and motivation per se. Sampling and pilot testing will begin with a variety of instruments, including self-concept, self-report, projectives, forced choice picture tests, perceptual tests, etc. New items and new materials will be included. Extensive interviews and observations of the children, teachers, and parents, will begin to validate the instrument. To sum up, this year will be used not only to follow-up the sample, but also to probe into the personal development and incorporation of success and failure as a style of life. This intensive study is a natural outcome of the first two years work. The third year will allow for intensive study of the child per se, while during the first two years we studied broader questions of the family, peer, and school environments.

III. DEVELOPMENTS:

The Successful Urban Slum Child project began officially on June 1, 1964. Three days later, we contacted and gained acceptance in a public elementary school situated in the heart of Harlem. The school has a predominantly Negro student enrollment of 1,000 students, and a school principal sympathetic to our research needs. A day or so later we were accepted in our second school. This school has a similar student population and is located within two short blocks of the first school, making it convenient for joint research operations. The two public elementary schools are seen as typical of Harlem, ethnically and in academic performance. The attached tables (Tables 1-5) document the above. The schools in our sample are lettered I and P. We have placed asterisks next to these letters to give these school prominence in the tables.[2]

Following the solution of our sample problem, we held a brief series of meetings with school administrators. Mainly, we needed to establish procedures compatible with both school operations and our research design.

The two and one-half weeks remaining in June were spent observing school classrooms. We observed several classrooms and afterwards, recorded each observation in detail. In brief, these observations included the general tone or atmosphere of the classroom setting, the overall display of teaching techniques and procedures made available to students, and, wherever possible, actual cases of student-teacher personal interaction that occurred during the course of general classroom proceedings.

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[2]For a discussion of these tables and the educational picture in Central Harlem, see Chapter 12, Education for Action in the HARYOU report, Youth in the Ghetto: A Study of the Consequences of Powerlessness and a Blueprint for Change. New York: Haryou, 1964.

Table 1

Ethnic Composition and Number of Pupils,
Central Harlem Elementary Schools,
October 31, 1962

Elementary Schools	Negro	Puerto Rican	White and Other	Number of Pupils
A	1.9%	75.4%	22.7%	1,195
B	92.1	7.5	0.4	828
C	97.4	2.3	0.3	1,718
D	98.4	1.2	0.4	949
E	98.4	1.1	0.5	1,740
F	99.4	0.5	0.1	1,264
G	78.6	20.7	0.7	1,604
H	97.2	2.0	0.8	1,082
I*	95.5	4.4	0.1	1,257
J	99.8	0.2	.....	1,322
K	91.8	8.2	.....	867
L	100.0	.....	.....	1,252
M	96.7	2.8	0.5	577
N	100.0	.....	.....	1,362
O	78.2	21.1	0.7	1,701
P*	98.2	1.1	0.7	1,127
Q	98.8	1.0	0.2	1,364
R	89.9	9.1	1.0	1,707
S	99.2	0.8	.....	905
T	90.3	9.4	0.3	992
All Elementary Schools	89.8	8.8	1.4	24,813

Source: New York City Board of Education.

Table 2

Percent of Third and Sixth Grade Pupils,
Above and Below Grade Level in Reading Comprehension,
Central Harlem Elementary Schools

Schools	READING COMPREHENSION			
	Below Grade Level		Above Grade Level	
	3rd Grade	6th Grade	3rd Grade	6th Grade
A	35.4%	93.5%	10.0%	2.0%
B	26.5	81.3	18.6	16.0
C	32.0	75.5	15.4	13.0
D	27.9	91.3	29.5	2.9
E	31.4	79.9	19.5	15.9
F	39.1	85.7	11.8	7.8
G	24.4	84.2	29.8	10.2
H	24.0	73.9	19.3	16.9
I*	39.6	84.8	16.8	8.2
J	33.3	81.3	23.0	14.0
K	30.0	85.2	20.0	9.6
L	34.6	85.7	15.5	9.5
M	19.0	60.4	36.7	26.7
N	20.5	84.4	35.7	12.3
O	35.7	74.5	21.0	15.4
P*	29.9	87.5	19.4	3.7
Q	30.4	66.3	16.8	20.2
R	34.8	85.3	18.5	8.0
S	13.2	77.4	35.6	11.3
T	20.0	74.0	33.3	14.8
All Schools	30.0	80.9	21.6	11.7

Source: New York City Board of Education.

Table 3

Percent of Third and Sixth Grade Pupils
Above and Below Grade Level in Word Knowledge,
Central Harlem Elementary Schools

	WORD KNOWLEDGE			
	Below Grade Level		Above Grade Level	
Schools	3rd Grade	6th Grade	3rd Grade	6th Grade
A	51.5%	94.0%	6.3%	1.0%
B	37.5	78.7	17.9	8.0
C	35.8	72.8	12.2	12.5
D	26.6	81.2	30.6	4.3
E	40.9	76.4	18.2	16.5
F	52.5	82.8	7.4	8.3
G	40.0	81.1	25.5	8.5
H	47.3	58.6	14.0	22.7
I*	52.3	78.5	14.1	10.1
J	32.7	78.9	33.3	11.7
K	41.2	80.0	15.1	6.7
L	47.6	81.7	14.3	9.8
M	19.0	56.4	34.2	27.7
N	28.3	79.2	21.6	8.3
O	34.0	73.5	21.2	10.0
P*	33.3	88.3	18.7	3.1
Q	40.0	64.8	16.1	18.5
R	43.8	82.0	16.2	5.9
S	28.7	80.2	24.0	9.5
T	27.6	71.7	25.4	15.6
All Schools	38.9	77.5	18.7	10.6

Source: New York City Board of Education.

Table 4

Percent of Sixth Grade Pupils Above and Below Grade Level In Arithmetic Computation and Arithmetical Problems and Concepts, Central Harlem Elementary Schools

Schools	COMPUTATION		PROBLEMS AND CONCEPTS	
	Below Grade Level	Above Grade Level	Below Grade Level	Above Grade Level
A	80.9%	3.6%	90.7%	1.5%
B	42.1	35.5	50.7	25.3
C	57.8	17.2	65.5	11.7
D	55.5	12.5	74.6	7.5
E	62.7	14.0	69.3	14.0
F	60.0	16.0	70.0	8.0
G	67.2	7.1	78.2	5.4
H	51.8	28.1	49.1	26.8
I*	61.5	13.3	79.0	9.1
J	53.3	23.7	66.9	14.6
K	44.2	25.0	61.5	16.3
L	75.9	7.0	77.9	5.2
M	28.6	36.7	36.7	26.5
N	52.7	19.3	65.7	14.4
O	60.2	17.3	56.8	12.4
P*	61.3	11.8	71.6	6.3
Q	49.7	18.4	53.7	22.6
R	62.1	12.9	74.0	7.6
S	49.6	21.4	61.5	17.7
T	38.0	31.3	49.0	26.4
All Schools	57.6	17.2	66.6	13.0

Source: New York City Board of Education.

Table 5

Median I.Q. Scores of
Third and Sixth Grade Pupils,
Central Harlem Elementary Schools

Schools	3rd Grade	6th Grade
A	88.8	79.8
B	86.5	85.4
C	89.3	87.7
D	90.4	84.1
E	89.0	87.5
F	90.0	86.2
G	85.9	81.8
H	92.7	91.3
I*	89.9	84.8
J	92.4	89.4
K	91.9	86.3
L	89.4	85.0
M	95.7	93.1
N	94.0	85.7
O	91.2	88.1
P*	91.0	82.9
Q	89.7	89.7
R	89.0	85.4
S	98.7	82.2
T	93.0	90.9
All Schools	90.6	86.3

Source: New York City Board of Education.

Each classroom observation is in the form of a written report and presently on file with us. Table 6 presents a listing of the school classrooms observed. Also during June, and the closing week of school (when classroom observations would have been inappropriate) we recorded information from official school records deemed appropriate to the next phase of our work. Table 7 presents the written information obtained.

During July, with the aid of factual data on students, we conducted home and family interviews. We designed the questions for the home interview and selected and interviewed several families in their homes. The questions were designed to elicit information concerning parental attitudes toward education, parental involvement and assistance with the child and his or her school activities, and the details concerning family ties of all the members of a household. Each home interview was recorded in complete detail and is presently on file. Table 8 lists briefly the homes visited and the families interviewed during July.[3]

During August an additional assistant was hired and she visited several selected homes to arrange for interviews during the month of September. Table 9 includes the homes of students selected for a home interview for the month of September.

During the first two weeks of September we continued with home and family interviewing. But of the 20 homes selected (see Table 9) we were able to contact, and actually interview, only three families. Families were typically not at home for appointments and no reasons were given for the cancellations. We tried a second time and even a

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[3]Fifteen more interviews were scheduled but the summer riots in Harlem required our rescheduling and eventual cancellation of these home visits.

Table 6

Classroom Observations

School	Class	Number of Visits
No. 1[1]	3-1[2]	1
No. 1	3-2	2
No. 1	3-3	3
No. 2	3-1	1
No. 2	3-2	1

[1]School No. 1 = School I (Tables 1-5); School No. 2 = School P (Tables 1-5).

[2]Class 3-1 denotes the highest achieving class in the third grade. The prefix (3) represents grade level and the exponent (1), (2), or (3) represent academic performance with (1) always being the highest.

Table 7

Home and Background Materials

School	Total Student Enrollment Per Grade and Grade Exponent[1]	Information/Student/ Sex
No. 1	2-1, 2-3, 2-6, 3-1, 3-4, 3-7, 4-1, 4-3, 4-5	Name of Student Sex Birthdate Birth Place Address Parent or Guardian Grade Telephone
No. 2	2-1, 2-3, 2-5, 3-1, 3-3, 3-op.[2], IGC[3], 4-1, 4-3, 4-op.[2]	Same As Above

[1] 2-1 = Class on the second grade and exponent (here 1) represents academic performance with 1 rated best. The higher the exponent, for example, 5, the lower the academic rank for that grade.

[2] 3-op and 4-op = Opportunity classes for slow learners.

[3] IGC class = Intellectually Gifted class of fourth grade students.

Table 8

Home Interviews for July (N:14)

Sex of Student	Grade and Grade Exponent	Type of Home
M	IGC	Tenement
M	IGC	Tenement
F	4-1	Tenement
M	3-1	Project
M	2-1	Tenement
M	IGC	Project
M	3-1	Project
M	2-1	Tenement
M	4-5	Tenement
F	IGC	Tenement
F	3-7	Tenement
M	3-1	Tenement
F	4-1	Project
M	2-6	Tenement

Table 9

Home Interviews Planned for September (N:20)[1]

Grade and Grade Exponent	Sex and Number of Students/Grade
2-6	One Male, One Female
2-1	One Male, One Female
2-3	One Male, One Female
3-1	One Male, One Female
3-4	One Male, One Female
3-7	One Male, One Female
4-1	One Male, One Female
4-3	One Male, One Female
4-5	One Male, One Female
IGC	One Male, One Female

[1]Purposely planned, and crucial to this listing, is that none of these families had a telephone in the home.

third to reschedule these meetings but these proved futile. Table 10 offers a listing of the homes visited and the families interviewed during the first two weeks of September.

In September, with a new addition to our staff, we devoted our time to preparations for the next phase of our work, which was a systematic testing of the entire school population. Although test data were available, as witnessed by Tables 1-5, these data are for the third and sixth grades only. Also, the inaccuracies in records, scoring, and perhaps administering of these tests, warranted our administering all tests to insure the utmost in the reliability of the data secured. We organized, in detail, the plans to administer three different group tests to approximately one thousand elementary school youngsters included in the two elementary schools.[4] Our group testing program began in the early part of October. The tests administered to this student population were Torrance's Tests of Creativity, The Lorge-Thorndike Group Intelligence Tests, and The Metropolitan Achievement Tests. These three diverse measures were given to obtain information about each student's innovative ability, innate capacity for learning, and his actual scholastic achievement. Table 11 lists the Tests, Test Level, and Sub-tests per grade level. Group testing was completed (except for first year achievement, which will be completed this Spring), by mid-December.

Beginning mid-December, and through to mid-January, we prepared

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[4]Entire student body of School No. 1 was tested and the Intellectually Gifted Class of fourth grade students of School No. 2. This class is comprised of at least one-third of former School No. 1 pupils and is therefore considered an extension of School No. 1's population. These students are transferred to School No. 2 to be eligible for advanced work in this "gifted" class.

Table 10

Home Interviews Completed in September with Families Having No Telephones (N:3)

Sex of Student/Grade	Grade and Grade Exponent	Type of Home
Female	2-6	Tenement
Female	3-4	Project
Male	4-1	Project

Table 11

Group Tests Administered by Grade Level for School No. 1 and IGC Class of School No. 2

Test	Test Level	Sub-Tests	Grade Level
orrance's Test of Creativity		Circles	1, 2, 3
orrance's Test of Creativity		Tin Cans	4, 4IGC (School No. 2)
orrance's Test of Creativity		Total Test	5, 6
orge-Thorndike Group Intelligence Test	Level 1	Total Test	1, 2
orge-Thorndike Group Intelligence Test	Level 2	Total Test	3, 4, 4IGC
orge-Thorndike Group Intelligence Test	Level 3	Total Test	5, 6
etropolitan Achievement	Primary I Battery	Reading: Sentences, Stories Arithmetic Computation	1, 2
etropolitan Achievement	Primary II Battery	Reading: Sentences, Stories Arithmetic Computation	3
etropolitan Achievement	Elementary Battery	Reading Arithmetic Computation	4, 4IGC
etropolitan Achievement	Intermediate Battery	Reading Arithmetic Computation	5, 6

interim reports on the various phases of our work thus far. The written reports that are presently on file with us are:

1. Interviews of Families without Telephones
2. Tables indicating Grade/Sex School Enrollment Breakdown
3. Subjective Impressions During Group Testing
4. Test Administration and Procedures During Group Testing
5. Interviews with the School Principals
6. The Family Interview
7. Data on Family Interviews
8. Collective Description of Homes
9. Subjective Impressions of Family Interviews
10. Subjective Views Relating to Mother-Child Relationship based on the Home Interview

In mid-January (following the public school Christmas recess), we began our Individual Testing Program. The individual testing program involved the administering of the Peabody Picture Vocabulary test and a sociometric test to approximately 1,000 children. To date, this phase of our work is still in progress. All testing of the elementary school youngsters in School No. 1 who were in grades one, three and six has been completed. It is expected that the testing of the students from School No. 1 in grades 2, 4, and 5 will be completed by May, and that students in School No. 2, in the fourth grade IGC class will be completed at the same time. No other classes of School No. 2 will be tested.

During the remaining three months (from date of this report) it is also expected that all school personnel in School No. 1 and the teacher of the IGC class in School No. 2 will be individually interviewed. A questionnaire will be designed by our research staff in accordance with our research design. Also, selected classes will be observed in late May and early June.

In summary, at the close of one full year ending June 1, 1965, the following data are on file for Project: The Successful Urban Slum Child:

1. Classroom Observation Reports - 8 - and as many observations this Spring as time permits (approximately 15).

2. Family Interview Reports - 17.

3. Individual Scores on Group Tests - approximately 1,000 each for three separate group tests.

4. Individual Scores on Individual Tests - approximately 1,000.

5. Sociometric Measure - approximately 1,000.

6. School Personnel Interviews - approximately 50.

7. Interim Reports - 10.

A. Preliminary and Speculative Findings:

The data from the family interviews suggest that one encouraging, stimulating adult figure in a child's background is probably essential for success in school. For some children born out of wedlock, this is the mother; for others it is the "adopted" parent(s). By "adopted", we mean the parents who are given the child by the "real" mother, who requested that these adults (usually neighbors) take care of their child for a while. These "adopted" parents, usually with no children of their own, take over the upbringing of the child as if he (she) were their own. Thus far, we have interviewed only a few fathers, and so we have little to report here; but it is a must for the coming year's work that we interview all the adults living in the home to obtain as much information as possible on the adult influence upon the children.

All the parents felt the importance of education, that education would be a way out of the ghetto, but they became vague when asked how this would help the child when he became 17 or 18 years old. The focus on education seemed unclear for these families for they knew little of

the routes of educational opportunity after high school graduation. In these interviews, the parents evinced an unselfish attitude towards the children. For example, the children were usually the best dressed in the family.

After the summer interviewing, it became apparent that more interviewing is needed to follow-up these preliminary clues. And this will be done, after the testing and identification phase (or the evaluation of the school and academic environment) has been completed. We decided that the entire student body needed to be tested to see if developmental patterns emerged, for the preliminary observation data indicated that boys and girls reacted differently to school, and the school differentiated by reprimanding the boys' aggressive behavior. We felt that behavior appeared a more important consideration for academic success than ability, per se. That is, a quiet and polite boy would be rewarded by being placed in the best class in the grade, whereas a boy of comparable ability, if he were vigorous, would be placed in an academically less desirable class. Scoring of selected achievement tests and intelligence tests appears to corroborate the above in that high ability children, usually boys, were found in the lowest achieving classes. Initial interviews with administrators and teachers support our view that selection based upon behavior does play a role.

IV. PLANS:

The continuation of this grant would permit the completion of scoring and analysis of the first phase of the study and the systematic interviewing of successful, average, and failing students, their families

and members of peer groups. We intend to complete this phase by May 31, 1966. We have previously described the plan for the study covering three years in the Method section of this report. In brief, the project would illuminate the process of academic success as it emerges for certain slum children. The child, his social and academic world would be explored to determine why one child succeeds and another does not.

The time schedule for the second year follows:

1. Scoring tests - June, 1965.
2. Analysis of data - July and August, 1965.
3. Completion of data collection on families from school records - September, 1965.
4. Writing of first year's work including library research - September and October, 1965.
5. Interviewing of children and families - November, 1965 through May, 1966.
6. Observation and interview of peer group - February, 1966 through May, 1966.